

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Glossary

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The following are working definitions used during the process to develop the Loudoun County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan. The working definitions were developed to prevent misunderstandings or misconceptions that can arise over the course of a public bicycle and pedestrian planning process.

Bicycling and Pathway-Oriented Terms

Bicycle: Every vehicle propelled solely by human power upon which any person may ride, having two tandem wheels, except scooters and similar devices. The term "bicycle" in this planning process also includes three and four-wheeled human-powered vehicles, but not tricycles for children.

Bicycle Facilities: A general term denoting a variety of improvements and provisions that are made by public agencies to accommodate or encourage bicycling, including bike lanes, shared-use pathways, signed bike routes and bicycle parking and storage facilities.

Bicycle Network: A system of public bicycle facilities that can be mapped and used by bicyclists for transportation and recreational purposes.

Bike Lane: A portion of a roadway that has been designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

Bikeway: A generic term for any road, street, path, trail or way, that in some manner, is specifically designated for bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes.

Shared Roadway: A roadway that is open to both bicycle and motor vehicle travel. Unless bicycle travel is explicitly prohibited, all highways, roads and streets are "Shared Roadways." Some Shared Roadways may have wide curb lanes (14' or greater) or paved shoulders, to increase comfort for bicyclists; however in most cases these roads do not have sufficient width to accommodate a Designated Bike Lane.

Shared Use Path (or Pathway): A bicycle and pedestrian path separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space, barrier or curb. Shared-Use Paths may be within the highway right-of-way (often termed "sidepath") or within an independent right-of-way, such as on an abandoned railroad bed or along a stream valley park. Shared use paths typically accommodate two-way travel and are open to pedestrians, in-line skaters, wheelchair users, joggers and other non-motorized path users. They are typically surfaced in asphalt or concrete, but may have hard-packed/all weather gravel or dirt surfaces as well. To safely accommodate a range of users, Shared Use Paths should be a minimum of 10' wide (or 8' in very constrained conditions)

Shoulder: Any portion of a roadway to the right of the right-most travel lane, but not including curbs, planting buffers and sidewalks. Shoulders can have a variety of surface treatments including pavement, gravel or grass. Depending on their width and surface, they serve a variety of purposes, including providing space for vehicles to slow and turn right, accommodation of stopped or broken-down vehicles, to allow emergency vehicles to pass, for structural support of the roadbed, or for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

Signed Shared Roadway (Signed Bike Route): A shared roadway that has been designated by signs as a preferred route for bicycle use.

Trail: The word "trail" has come to mean a wide variety of facilities types, including everything from a "marked or beaten path, as through woods or wilderness" to a paved "multi-use trail" such as the W&OD rail-trail. The same word "trail" is used to describe hiking trails, equestrian trails, Indian trails or even tourist-oriented driving routes such as Virginia's Civil War Trails. For this reason, this planning process will not use the word "trail" to reference a facility intended for bicycle transportation. We urge use of the term Shared Use Path in place of Multi-Use Trail.

Note: Several of these definitions are taken from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) "Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities," 1999 Edition.

Walking and Pedestrian-Oriented Terms

Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS): A device that communicates information about pedestrian signal timing in non-visual format, through the use of audible tones (or verbal messages) and vibrating surfaces.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): 1990 Federal law establishing the civil rights of people with disabilities. Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and requires common places used by the public to provide an equal opportunity for access.

Buffer: That portion of a highway, road or street between the curb-face or edge of the pavement and the sidewalk that provides a spatial buffer between vehicular traffic and pedestrians on sidewalks. Buffers often include landscape plantings such as grass, trees or shrubs, or utility poles, and may also be referred to as the "planting strip," "landscape buffer," "tree buffer" or "tree boxes." Buffers can also include barriers such as highway guide rails (guardrails) or bollards. In rural or suburban areas the buffer may be a grassy swale or drainage ditch. In urban areas, downtowns, or on "Main Streets" the buffer may also include street furniture, street signs, fire hydrants, vending boxes, lighting poles, etc.

Crosswalk: The horizontal portion of roadways, usually at intersections, reserved for pedestrian crossing; it may be marked or unmarked. Three marking patterns using white striping are most common: 1) Double Parallel lines, 2) "Zebra Stripes:" white cross hatches perpendicular to the pedestrian direction of travel, or 3) "Ladder:" perpendicular white cross hatches combined with double parallel lines on the outside edges.

Curb Ramp: A combined ramp and landing to provide access between street level and sidewalk level, usually at intersections or designated crosswalks. ADA accessible ramps must achieve particular design requirements including a running grade no steeper than 1:20. Curb ramps are intended to provide street/sidewalk access to all types of pedestrians, as well as bicyclists who maybe legally using the sidewalk or crosswalk.

Detectable Warning: A standardized surface feature built in or applied to walking surfaces or other elements to warn people who are blind or visually impaired of specified hazards.

Median Refuge: An area within an island or median that is intended for pedestrians to wait safely away from travel lanes for an opportunity to continue crossing the roadway.

Midblock Crosswalk: A legally established crosswalk that is not at an intersection.

Pedestrian: A person walking or traveling by means of a wheelchair, electric scooter, crutches or other walking devices or mobility aids. Use of the term pedestrian is meant to include all disabled individuals regardless of which equipment they may use to assist their self-directed locomotion (unless they are using a bicycle). It also includes runners, joggers, those pulling or pushing strollers, carriages, carts and wagons, and those walking bicycles.

Pedestrian Access Route: A corridor of accessible travel through the public right-of-way that has, among other properties, a specified minimum width and cross slope.

Pedestrian Crossing Interval: The combined phases of a traffic signal cycle provided for a pedestrian crossing in a crosswalk, after leaving the top of a curb ramp or flush landing, to travel to the far side of the vehicular way or to a median, usually consisting of the WALK interval plus the pedestrian clearance interval.

Pedestrian Signal Indication: The illuminated WALK/DON'T WALK message (or walking person/hand symbols) that communicates the pedestrian phase of a traffic signal, and their audible and tactile equivalents.

Sidewalk: That portion of a highway, road or street specifically constructed for the use of pedestrians on the outside edge of the vehicular travel way. Sidewalks are typically, but not always, curb-separated from the roadway and made of concrete, brick, asphalt or another hard surface materials.